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People Will Find
Their Own Way

MONDAY, JULY 30, 1934.

STRATOSPHERE ROBOTS

STRATOSPHERISTS KEPNER, STEVENS
AND ANDERSON: May you have another chance to probe the stratosphere. You thrilled us Saturday, but next time may you have a softer and slower landing.

While this elaborately planned National Geographic-United States army flight is having its results written into history, consideration should be given to the possibility of having robots, inanimate instruments that speak by radio, undertake this hazardous task.

It would cost relatively few dollars and risk no human lives to make free pilot balloon ascension that might break the Settle-Fordney altitude record. Lightweight radio transmitters could be carried upward, varying their messages according to the pressure, temperature and humidity they encounter. Radio transmitting balloons were used successfully last year in the Arctic to get weather information from high in the air. Researches of the United States army corps and the California Institute of Technology indicate that improved balloons might be used frequently to supplement the daily airplane flights that reach about 15,000 feet in dozen United States localities to supply weather information.

Larger balloons carrying more instruments could be sent to the stratosphere for a fraction of the cost of human attempts. Through repeated flights, through the constant ingenuity of scientists, the information to be obtained probably would surpass that which it was hoped to obtain in Saturday's valiant effort.

THE AFTERMATH

CONVALESCENCE, like disease, has its dangers as the Pacific Coast is learning. Its dockers' strike is on the way to a just settlement, and San Francisco's "general strike" is a bitter memory. But the poisons engendered by the long struggle now are breaking out in malignant social madness. Vigilante committees, recalling the lawless pioneer days, are abroad in coastal cities and towns, bent on destroying radical movements by methods often cruel and illegal. They are raiding halls, arresting men right and left for mere possession of opinion, destroying workers' literature and seeking to spread terror among unpopular minority groups.

A rebuke of these enemies of law and order was administered by an official who went through the heat of the strife.

Our policy should be to give the Communists little fuel to work with and to see that they are given little cause for complaint," said District Attorney Mathew Brady in a San Francisco police court where the judge just had assailed a band of alleged Communists—before their trial. "Legal penalties," said Brady, "should be imposed on those Communists who break the law, but free speech should not be restrained even then."

DOLLARS AND DEBTS

WHAT a great hullabaloo reactionaries are raising over the cost of the New Deal!

They speak in terms of dollars. But, after all, a dollar is only a measure of value. A government's debt problems are little different from the debt problems of a farmer or a manufacturer. A farmer doesn't reckon his debt in dollars, but in bushels of wheat or corn or bales of cotton. And a manufacturer reckons his debt in the finished goods he produces. So, too, must a government reckon its debts in terms of commodities produced, which in the final analysis constitute the wealth of the nation.

Perhaps the most accurate way of comparing the debt burden before the New Deal with the debt burden of today would be to make a computation based on wholesale price indices then and now. But that is a mathematical task too forbidding for hot weather. Another interesting comparison could be made by weighing the public debt of eighteen months ago against the income of the people in the last year of the Old Deal, and comparing it to a similar computation showing the ratio that exists between the public debt of today and the income of the people in the first year of the New Deal. But that also is a tough statistical job.

However, there is a simple way to measure the public debt. And that is to do it in terms of commodities.

How many bushels of wheat would have been required to pay the public debt in March, 1933, at the birth of the New Deal? How many bushels would be required to pay the public debt today? How many bales of cotton? How many barrels of oil?

Here, roughly, are the figures. (In parentheses are commodity prices—average in the month of March, 1933, and the average last week):

Debt in Dollars—March, 1933, \$21,000,000,000; July, 1934; \$27,000,000,000.

Debt in Wheat—March, 1933, 42.8 billion bushels (49 cents a bushel); July, 1934, 31 billion bushels (87 cents a bushel).

Debt in Cotton—March, 1933, 600 million bales (7 cents a pound); July, 1934, 425.2 million bales (12.7 cents a pound).

Debt in Oil—March, 1933, 55.3 billion barrels (38 cents a barrel); July, 1934, 26.7 billion barrels (94 cents a barrel).

The same kind of comparison might be made with dozens of other commodities to show how the New Deal has made the public debt easier to bear.

Of course, this is an over-simplification of a complicated situation, but it is at least suggestive.

BULLETS DO NOT VOTE

HOWEVER great the weaknesses of democracy may seem in a time of crisis, it is hard to escape the impression that the

bloody troubles of Europe today arise in large part because of the denial of democracy.

Austria, swept by the repercussions of an assassination ominously similar to that of Franz Ferdinand twenty years ago, simply is the most recent example.

For the underlying cause of such disorders is the fact that ordinary democratic processes have been suspended. Racked and torn by cross-currents of passion, resentment, and despair that have been in the making ever since the war, the central European peoples have no way of expressing themselves but with guns.

Germany furnished an object lesson a few weeks ago.

Discontent with the way the Nazi policies were working out came to a head and demanded expression. No peaceful means of expression was possible.

Men could not argue their cause, they could not propagandize by means of newspapers and magazines, they could not look forward to a chance to use ballots. The machine gun and the revolver became their only recourse—and so, inevitably, the government had to use the same implements in replying to them.

Now it is Austria's turn, and the same kind of thing happens. Instead of a political campaign, with speeches, pamphlets, advertisements, and so on, there must be a "putsch," with bombs, gunfire, assassinations, and all the rest. There is no other possible outlet for discontent.

One does not need to look at these tragic happenings very long to get a new realization of the inestimable value of democracy.

Democracy has its weaknesses, to be sure—great and glaring, some of them, for which we often pay a heavy price.

But it does provide a safety valve for public discontent. It does make it possible for people to get rid of a government, a party, or a policy which they do not like, in peaceful and orderly way. It lets every man have his say about the state of affairs about him; it makes the appeal to force unnecessary.

We need to keep this constantly in mind. There are people in this country who profess an admiration for dictatorship—whether proletarian, Fascist, or whatnot—on the ground that democracy is inefficient and unwieldy.

One look at the woes of Germany and Austria is enough to show that democracy's benefits are almost infinitely greater than its drawbacks.

MURDER BY THOUSANDS

A STRIKING contrast between crime conditions in the United States and crime conditions in England is drawn by J. H. Wallis, popular writer of detective stories, who has devoted a little spare time to comparing statistics on real and fictional murders in the two countries.

In England, he finds, detective story writers actually "kill" more people than do real-life murderers. In England there are approximately 200 homicides a year, and the fiction writers can keep ahead of that mark without half trying.

But in the United States—well, Mr. Wallis finds that American murderers remove some 13,000 mortals from this earthly scene every year; and that's a mark that even the most active S. S. Van Dines, Ellery Queen, and Mignon Eberharts can't hope to keep up with.

Which perhaps explains why the American detective story generally has more homicides in it than does the English variety. One murder, by itself, is an unusual and absorbing thing, to an English reader. They have come in bunches to thrill an American.

FAREWELL, MARINES!

WITHIN the next fortnight or so, the last American marines will be leaving the island of Haiti—and neither the Haitians, the American public, nor the marines themselves will feel very badly about it if they never go back.

The marines have been on the island for many years. Their greatest strength there was in May, 1921, when more than 2,000 of all ranks were concentrated there. This spring and summer the number had shrunk to approximately 750; and now, because of the new understanding reached between the American and Haitian governments, it is shrinking to nothing at all.

It is good to see the marines leaving. The island's situation was very tangled indeed when they first landed, and they did a lot of very excellent work; but in the end the Haitians must work out their own salvation as an independent state, and they can't do that until the last American marine has gone home.

THE DILLINGERS

THE Dillingers family is appearing on the stage of a local theater this week, answering questions about John Dillinger, the desperado, who was slain eight days ago on his last trip to a theater.

That members of his family, including his father, should appear in a theater so soon after the family tragedy, seems rather odd.

But on the stage yesterday John Dillinger Sr. said he had accepted the stage offer because it assured him of a better living than life on the farm.

However, those who actually sympathize with the elder Dillinger should hope that he doesn't count too much on his theatrical career.

The farm probably will pay better dividends in the long run, not only financially, but also in the essential requirements of a bereaved family—peace and quiet.

Young John Jacob Astor says life is difficult for him because of his riches. If pressed further, he might agree that life would be a bit more difficult without his riches.

President Roosevelt says he can't tell what the party affiliations of his brain trusters are. We'll let Postmaster Farley care.

While, as one doctor says, every kiss you take shortens your life three minutes, your life may be shorter, but oh, how much sweeter!

Barney Baruch has decided to retire for a while and write his memoirs—since he couldn't have himself called before a senate foot.

A military dictatorship is predicted soon for Germany, the present type being only of the Boy Scout order.

The truth is that if the movie magnates really clean up the films, most of their products will be washouts.

Liberal Viewpoint

BY DR. HARRY ELMER BARNES

(This is the first of two articles on the film controversy)

THE fundamental cultural issue involved in the movement to purge the movies is one of far greater significance than is usually perceived. It goes more deeply than the question of the profits of a great industry or the salaries of its artists.

It also is something wider than the issue of whether or not self-constituted bodies shall control the education, moral and art of the American people.

It brings sharply to the fore the basic question who shall be our guides in so advanced and highly civilized an age as the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Moving pictures are more than an industrial product. They are, or certainly should be, a prominent element in our culture, ranking with the newspapers, radio and the stage.

They have already attained a marvelous development as a manifestation of applied science and popular art. In spite of all the valid criticism which may be leveled against them it is doubtful that any other notable achievement of recent capitalist enterprise offers more to the public for its money or contains so slight an element of evil in proportion to the educational and recreational facilities provided.

ALMOST any sane and civilized man would, however, welcome any intelligent movement, within or without the films, to insure better pictures. We would profit greatly if we could have productions which deal with more vital and realistic themes. The movies could do far more than they accomplish at present in the way of popular education and social guidance.

While not a movie addict myself, I have certainly seen representative movies which fall into every category of film production.

I have been frequently impressed with the insufferable dullness or the incredible triviality and imbecility of many pictures.

EVEN this most deadly charge against the movies—that of a prevailing trend toward triviality, nonsense and too often sheer imbecility—may be leveled quite as much against the American public as against the film industry.

I am personally well acquainted with some of the leading producers and know that they would much prefer to make their millions out of worthy and educational films if they could do so.

Many a producer has spent large sums in making pictures which dealt intelligently with an important current social theme, only to find that the antics of one of his clowns brought in a hundred-fold more paid admissions.

Inasmuch as the film industry is not a charitable enterprise, but one of the most highly organized and expensively equipped of capitalist undertakings, it can hardly be blamed if it produces what the public wants.

No honest and fair critic of the movies can well allege that the producers have been as reluctant to give us films providing both social education and a high order of entertainment as the public has been in giving the necessary support to such laudable efforts.

Capital Capers

BY GEORGE ABELL

AMBASSADOR ROA of Mexico, who has taken a cottage at Blue Ridge Summit for the summer, has with him his two beautiful nieces, the Senoritas Dolores and Sara Amalia Chico Alatorre.

The two nieces have been anxious to learn how to play tennis, and last week end a young American player (who was visiting former Ambassador Bill Culbertson at Blue Ridge Summit) volunteered to teach them.

"But first," he informed Senorita Dolores Chico, "we had better start by a simpler game, so you'll learn more easily."

And he handed her a badminton racket.

Senorita Dolores took the racket and the game started.

"Ready," sang out the instructor.

He batted the shuttlecock across the net in a negligent manner. The next instant it came flying back and struck him in the eye.

To make a long story short, the game resulted in a complete victory for Senorita Dolores.

"I didn't know you played badminton," said the disconcerted American.

"I don't," smiled Dolores, "but in my country I am an expert in a very similar game—friction."

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American marines will be leaving the island of Haiti—and neither the Haitians, the American public, nor the marines themselves will feel very badly about it if they never go back.

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During the entire dance, through seventy-two hours of scorching heat and choking dust, the dancers abstain from food or drink. In bare feet the braves tramp with a slow, steady gait to where the head of a buffalo is suspended on a large pole. Thumping of tom-toms and wailing of squaws accompanied the ceremony.

Political friends of Senator Borah (amused at news that he will attend the ritual) suggested he may be acquiring some knowledge of Indian religious culture to bolster up his attack on the Democratic platform.

H. G. Wells has finished his scenario for his first film, to be entitled "The Shape of Things to Come," and just after such a rumpus has been kicked up about Mae West pictures.

Isn't it funny that Austria should have to depend on other powers for its independence?

Perhaps, if the starving cattle in the Chicago stockyards were told of the drought in the mid-west, they mightn't feel so bad about dying before the strike.

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IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

BY HARRY ELMER BARNES

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